

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

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INFO AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

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CINCLANT NORFOLK VA

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON ENG

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 0193

DEPT PASS DIA

CINCLANT AND CINCUSNAVEUR FOR POLADED

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS MA

SUBJECT: POLITICAL PROBLEMS FACING GENERAL RAMANANTSOA

REF: TANANARIVE 156 AND PREVIOUS

BEGIN SUMMARY: CONTINUED DELAY AND SUSPENSE IN ANNOUNCEMENT
NEW MALAGASY CABINET EXPLICABLE IN TERMS COMPLEXITY OF
POLITICAL PROBLEMS FACING GENERAL RAMANANTSOA. IN
DESCENDING ORDER OF PRIORITY IN RELATION TO LIKELIHOOD
OF GENERATING VIOLENCE, THESE PROBLEMS ARE: (1) MERINA-
COASTAL TRIBE RIVALRY, (2) POLITICAL RIVALRY OF STRONG
PERSONALITIES ASSOCIATED WITH DIFFERENT SECURITY FORCES,
(3) STEADY ECONOMIC DETERIORATION. WITH INCREASING
LIKELIHOOD OF SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE IN CABINET COMPOSITION
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TO DEAL WITH THESE PROBLEMS, INCLUDING REPORTED

POSSIBILITY OF DEPARTURE OF FOREIGN MINISTER RATSIRAKA, IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. INTERESTS COULD BE CONSIDERABLE, BUT WILL BECOME CLEARER WHEN COMPOSITION OF NEW CABINET KNOWN. END SUMMARY.

1. WHILE MDAGASCAR STILL HANGS IN SUSPENSE FOR HEAD OF GOVT GENERAL RAMANANTSOA'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW CABINET, IT SEEMS USEFUL GIVE EMBASSY'S SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF PRINCIPAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS CONFRONTING RAMANANTSOA IN FORMATION NEW GOVT. HE IS FACED WITH FOLLOWING THREE MAIN PROBLEMS, WHICH WE LIST IN DESCENDING ORDER OF PRIORITY IN RELATION TO LIKELIHOOD OF GENERATING VIOLENCE:

(A) RIVALRY BETWEEN COASAL TRIBES PRDOMINANTLY OF AFRICAN ORIGIN AND MERINA TRIBE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN ORIGIN WHICH DOMINANT IN TANANRIVE.

(B) PERSONAL AND POLITICAL RIVALRY BETWEEN STRONG PERSONALITIES, PARTICULARLY COLONEL RATSIMANDRAVA, COMMANDER OF GENDARMERIE, AND COLONEL RABETAFIKA OF ARMY.

(C) STEADY ECONOMIC DETERIORATION OF PAST THREE YEARS, MOST MANIFEST IN RECURRING SHORTAGES OF MAIN STAPLE, RICE.

2. COTIER-MERINA RIVALRY. MADAGASCAR'S MOST FUNDAMENTAL AND ESSENTIALLY INTRACTABLE PROBLEM, IT HAS STARKLY REEMERGED IN CURRENT CRISIS AFTER ALMOST TWO YEARS OF QUIESCENCE, AND IS INDEED MOST IMPORTANT SINGLE FACTOR GENERATING THIS CRISIS.

3. PUBLICATION IN JANUARY 30 PRESS OF CONDITIONS POSED TO GENERAL RAMANANTSOA BY COLONEL BRECHARD RAJAONARISON, SENIOR COTIER OFFICER WHO HAS TAKEN REFUGE IN PREDOMINANTLY COTIER GROUPE MOBILE DE LA POLICE COMPOUND, UNDERLINE SERIOUSNESS OF THIS ISSUE. SIGNIFICANTLY PUTTING HIMSELF FORWARD AS SPOKESMAN FOR "PROVISIONAL COMMITTEE OF MILITARY, GENDARMES AND POLICE FOR PRESERVATION OF NATIONAL UNITY" (OBVIOUSLY COTIER GROUPING FROM THREE SECURITY SERVICES), AND ALLEGING THAT MINORITY (FOR WHICH READ MERINA) HAS JUST DESTROYED NATIONAL UNITY BY MANEUVERING TO

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ELIMINATE PROVINCIAL ELITE (MEANING COTIER) BY IMPLICATING IT IN "IMAGINARY COUP D'ETAT AGAINST FORMER RAMANANTSOA GOVERNMENT," RAJAONARISON PROPOSES IMMEDIATE PROPORTIONAL DISTRIBUTION BY PROVINCIAL ORIGIN OF ALL COMMANDS IN ARMED FORCES AS WELL AS RESPONSIBLE POSITIONS IN CIVIL ADMINISTRATION. UNTIL FIRST CONDITION MET, RAJAONARISON AND COHORTS WILL NOT LEAVE CAMP WHERE COTIER FORCES EVIDENTLY PREPARED DEFEND THEM BY FORCE. (MY RESIDENCE INCIDENTALLY IS ABOUT HALF-

WAY BETWEEN THIS CAMP AND ARMY POST AT WHICH RAMANANTSOA HAS HIS OFFICE, AND DIRECTLY IN LINE OF FIRE BETWEEN THE TWO.)

4. EMBASSY FURTHER CONVINCED (AS FORESHADOWED IN PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS IN TANANARIVE'S 0145) THAT RAMANANTSOA WILL HAVE TO SWING BALANCE IN NEW GOVERNMENT INCREASINGLY TOWARD COTIERS. MERINA INSTINCTIVELY RECOGNIZE THIS WILL BE OUTCOME, AND THAT ACCOUNTS FOR APPARENT HARASSMENT OF WHICH FRENCH CITIZENS BEING SUBJECTED (TANANARIVE'S 0191) SINCE MERINA ALWAYS SUSPECT FRENCH OF BEING BEHIND COTIERS.

5. PERSONAL RIVALRIES. INTERESTING NEW POSSIBILITY HAS EMERGED AS MEANS RESOLVING THIS ISSUE. JAPANESE AMBASSADOR TOLD ME EVENING JAN 29 THAT SOURCE CLOSE TO COLONEL RABETAFIKA HAS TOLD HIM THAT RABETAFIKA LIKELY BE ELIMINATED AS DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF GOVT AND RATSIMANDRAVA AND RATSIRAKA FROM

NEW CABINET. REASONING IS THAT, IF ANY OF THREE MOST LIKELY SUCCESSORS TO RAMANANTSOA ARE REMOVED FROM POSITION OF POWER, ALL THREE MUST GO TO AVOID UNSETTLING SUSPICION TOWARD ANY WHO WOULD REMAIN.

6. RABETAFIKA MAY BECOME MEMBER, PERHAPS HEAD, OF "COMMISSION OF WISE MEN" TO PREPARE NEW CONSTITUTION GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO PRESENT TO PEOPLE BY 1977. PRESUMABLY RATSIMANDRAVA WOULD REMAIN AS COMMANDER OF GENDARMERIE. WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE RATSIRAKA? PERHAPS TO RETURN AS COMMANDER OF MADAGASCAR'S MINISCULE NAVY. OF THESE THREE, RATSIRAKA HAS ALWAYS APPEARED AS ONE WITH LEAST POWER BASE.

7. ECONOMIC SITUATION. DESPITE GRUMBLING, FATALISTIC MALAGASY CAN PROBABLY BE EXPECTED CONTINUE ACCEPT
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DETERIORATION IN ALREADY LOW STANDARD OF LIVING, WITH INCREASED RESORT TO CRIME BUT NOT TO POLITICAL VIOLENCE. THUS, WHILE AS INDICATED TANANARIVE'S 0156 THERE IS UNDOUBTEDLY POLITICAL STRUGGLE GOING ON BETWEEN RIGHT AND LEFT OVER FUTURE ECONOMIC POLICY, PROBLEM THIS PRESENTS FOR RAMANANTSOA IS NOT OF SAME ORDER OF MAGNITUDE AS FIRST TWO DESCRIBED ABOVE.

8. IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. WE SHALL PROBABLY NOT HAVE VERY CLEAR IDEA OF IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. INTERESTS UNTIL COMPOSITION OF NEW CABINET IS KNOWN. DEPARTURE OF RATSIRAKA AS FOREIGN MINISTER WOULD NOT NECESSARILY CHANGE MADAGASCAR'S RADICAL NON-ALIGNED FOREIGN POLICY, SINCE HE WOULD LEAVE NOT FOR POLICY REASONS, BUT BECAUSE OF POLITICAL PERSONALITY FACTORS. DIRECTION OF FOREIGN AND ECONOMIC POLICY

INFLUENCE OF INCREASED COTIER REPRESENTATION IN CABINET
WILL DEPEND ON WHO COTIER MINISTERS ARE. IF RAMANANTSOA
TURNS TO NATIONAL POPULAR COUNCIL FOR DEVELOPMENT (ELECTED
CONSULTATIVE BODY), COTIERS (SUCH AS ITS PRESIDENT,
MICHEL FETY) MAY BE RADICALLY INCLINED. IF HE TURNS TOWARD
MILITARY OR CIVILIAN COTIERS ASSOCIATED WITH TSIRANANA
REGIME, THEY MAY BE MORE CONSERVATIVE.
MENDENHALL

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